

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs

Agency

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Agency Cultural Affairs

Budget Unit 2590IM30017

Iowa Great Places Infrastructure Grants - RIIF

Funding Updates

January 15, 2015

FY 2015	\$ 1,000,000
FY 2014	\$ 1,000,000
FY 2013	\$ 1,000,000
FY 2012	\$ 1,000,000

RIIF Report Narrative - Program Summary

Launched in 2005, Iowa Great Places (IGP) is administered by the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) and now includes 36 Iowa communities designated and awarded grant funding as one of Iowa's Great Places.

Through IGP, the DCA continues to put out a challenge to Iowa communities, regions and neighborhoods to recognize and invest in what makes their place a Great Place. This was made possible again in 2014-15 through reinvestment from the Legislature in recognition of the program's successful outcomes on behalf of Iowans.

In its reinvigorated form, IGP seeks to have a transformative impact on community vitality and quality of life for Iowans. In reviewing applications, the DCA favors proposals that exemplify bold thought and innovation; encourage creativity and entrepreneurship; foster a sense of place and identity; and demonstrate a commitment to enhancing community vitality and quality of life.

The program centers on recognizing and cultivating the unique and authentic qualities of Iowa neighborhoods, communities and regions and aligns State resources with local and private matching funds to capitalize on these strengths through infrastructure. The program's insistence on an inclusive and comprehensive visioning process enables communities to form a foundation for success and for public and private dollars to be wisely invested in projects that are sustainable and involve significant partnerships and collaboration.

New IGP must demonstrate that they have achieved a guiding vision plan and interrelated set of strategies; broad based support for the project(s), as evidenced by the presence of multiple local and regional partners and public-private partnerships; and strong organizational capacity as demonstrated by financial and programmatic performance and service to constituents.

FY15 Grant Cycle Summary

This year, the IGP Citizen Advisory Board reviewed applications from nearly a dozen Iowa communities requesting approximately \$3 million. Six communities were ultimately awarded funding, after work with program staff, site visits, and careful review by a panel of IGP Citizen Advisory Board members and State employees with expertise in areas ranging from trail development to tourism.

Common themes identified across the communities awarded funding include an emphasis on creating livable, walkable communities, revitalizing downtowns and urban neighborhoods, and capitalizing on outdoor recreational corridors.

Iowa Great Places Citizen Advisory Board

The IGP Citizen Advisory Board, under the State of Iowa's formal Boards and Commissions, advises the DCA on the program's guidelines, annually reviews grant applications, and recommends designation and grant funding to eligible communities and projects to the DCA. The Board consists of 12 members, which includes private citizens representing cities and counties, local government officials, cultural leaders, community development officials, and experts in business development. Members of the Board are appointed to three-year, staggered terms and convene 3-4 times per year.

Notable outcomes and impacts

One key metric of the program's success is that IGP have continued to receive statewide, national and even international recognition after their designation and grant funding period:

- The City of Marion (IGP 2009) recently received federal support through ArtPlace America, a highly competitive program that awards major grants to communities working to use the arts to shape their social, physical and economic future. Marion is Iowa's first ArtPlace America grantee.
- The renovation and re-opening of the Historic Park Inn in Mason City (IGP 2009), a project partially funded by IGP, has resulted in a sharp increase in tourism and economic development of Federal Street.
- The City of Dubuque (IGP 2006) was named an 'All-American City', among many other accolades the city has received, while Marshalltown (IGP 2014) received the All-American City designation in 2014.
- The Danish Villages (IGP 2010) attracted international attention and a sharp increase in visitors last September for a film, produced in Denmark, highlighting the community's unique cultural heritage and local assets, many cultivated through the Great Places program.

In their own words:

"The City of Marion owes much to both the Iowa Arts Council and the Great Places program for the tremendous support we've enjoyed over the last few years. As I've said before, empowering citizens is one of the intangible strengths of the Great Places program. By giving volunteers like me a reason to dream big, Iowans are finding exciting ways to improve the communities we love."

"This designation as an Iowa Great Place will be a catalyst to achieve the community's vision for expanded outdoor recreation opportunities within Iowa's Creative Corridor. As the first project for the Cedar-Wapsi Recreational Byway, Indian Creek Nature Center will expand our commitment to the outdoors and connect people with nature through the Amazing Space project." – John Myers, Indian Creek Nature Center, Linn County

"The city of Grinnell is pleased to be recognized as one of Iowa's many Great Places. The designation will serve as a catalyst to the improvements to both Central Park and entrance enhancements to our downtown. These improvements will greatly enhance the work that has already been completed to our downtown strengthening this area as the social, cultural, and economic center of Grinnell." – Grinnell Mayor Gordon R. Canfield

"On behalf of the City of Waukee, our Project Team and all the Trail Communities we thank you and the Great Places Program for this significant award. The completion of this project along with the Iowa Great Places designation will certainly yield significant cultural, recreational, health and economic benefits for the region and statewide – now and well into the future." – Randy Jensen, Raccoon River Valley Trail committee

"The City of Fort Dodge and its surrounding area have faced numerous challenges in recent decades. Through strong leadership, extensive partnering efforts, active volunteerism, and hard work, the greater Fort Dodge area has achieved great strides in overcoming many of those challenges such as job loss, dilapidating infrastructure, and population loss. All of the positive energy stirring within the region is a result of wonderful partnerships, similar to those formed with Iowa Great Places and the State of Iowa. The Iowa Great Places Grant of \$125,000 helps immensely as we continue to improve the livability of our community while recognizing the region's historic and cultural legacy. We thank the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs for recognizing our current and forthcoming accomplishments and for financially supporting our efforts of truly living out the definition of being a "Great Place"." – Carissa Miller, City of Fort Dodge